MARINE CORPS PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Public Affairs Brief -- Overview

- **Why PA?**
- **Functions**
- **Priorities**
- **Internal Information**
- **Community Relations**
- **External Information**
- **Crisis Communications**
- **PA & Legal**
- **PAO role in interviews**
- **Misperceptions**
- **Keys to success**
- **Helpful tips**

Why Public Affairs?

- **Makes Marines more effective warriors**
  - Better informed
  - Families better informed
  - Command communications
- **Gains the support of the American People**
  - For recruiting their sons and daughters
  - For resources to keep the Corps strong
- **Shapes public impressions of the Marine Corps**
  - Shape with the TRUTH

What PA does …

- Provide timely and accurate information to the media
- Facilitate media coverage of Marines, units, and events
- Educate and interact with the community and general public
- Educate and inform the internal Marine Corps audience

What PA isn’t …

- The media
- Protocol
- PR firm
  - Not marketing, not advertising
- Visual Information Support Center
- Combat Camera

The PAO

- The majority are excellent
- Some are career PAOs
- Many are lateral movers with an operational background
- Credibility is a challenge at times
- DINFOS trained
- Many with advanced degrees

- LOW DENSITY/HIGH DEMAND CAPABILITY

The PAO & THE CG/CO

- **Advise the commander regarding**
  - **The public affairs environment**
  - **Current news media interests**
  - **Public opinion concerns**
  - **Command information matters**
  - **Public affairs implications of evolving operation plans**

Role of the PAO

- **Public affairs personnel have been trained to tell you the bad news as well as the good news.**
- **Make it easy for them to be absolutely honest, even critical, with you.**
- **A good public affairs officer will only be as useful as he or she is allowed to be.**

Installation PA activities

- **May appear to be garrison-centric but still ultimately support the war-fighter**
- **Marine Corps PA is in the process of concentrating more public affairs assets on expeditionary operations**
- **Work with the operational commands; share PA assets; one team, one fight**
- **Be open to change – the status quo may be out of step with the times (base newspapers?)**

ORGANIZATION

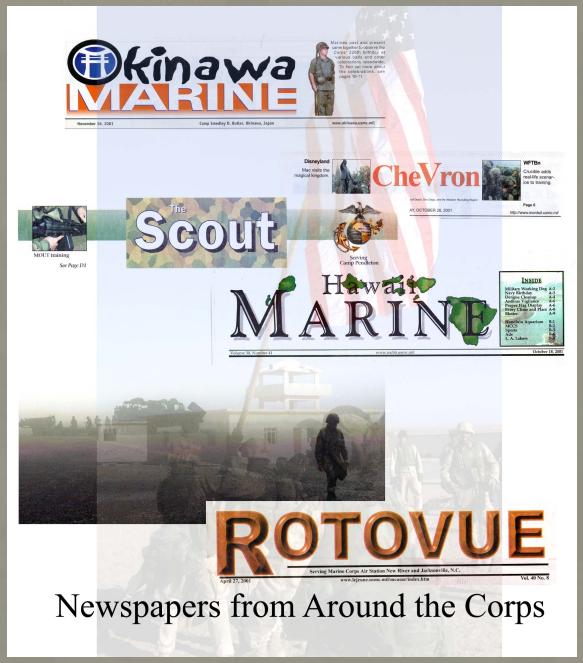
- **The installation CPAO T/O's vary, but the average manning for the larger shops is about 12 Marines, usually headed by a Major as the Director and a Captain as the Deputy Director.**
- **The smaller installation offices average about 8 Marines.**
- **Installation PA Marines are often used to deploy.**
- **The ongoing USMC PA Strategic Planning review is looking at moving some installation PA billets to the operating PA force structure.**

PA Priorities…

- **Providing Commander's (operational and garrison) Public Affairs expertise**
  - **Advise, Plan, and Execute**
- **Engage and include the media**
  - **Best coverage, builds relationships**
  - **Access = positive press (embed program good example)**
- **Coverage and distribution of the Marine Corps' roles and missions**
  - **For immediate release to DoD/Div PA**

Internal Information

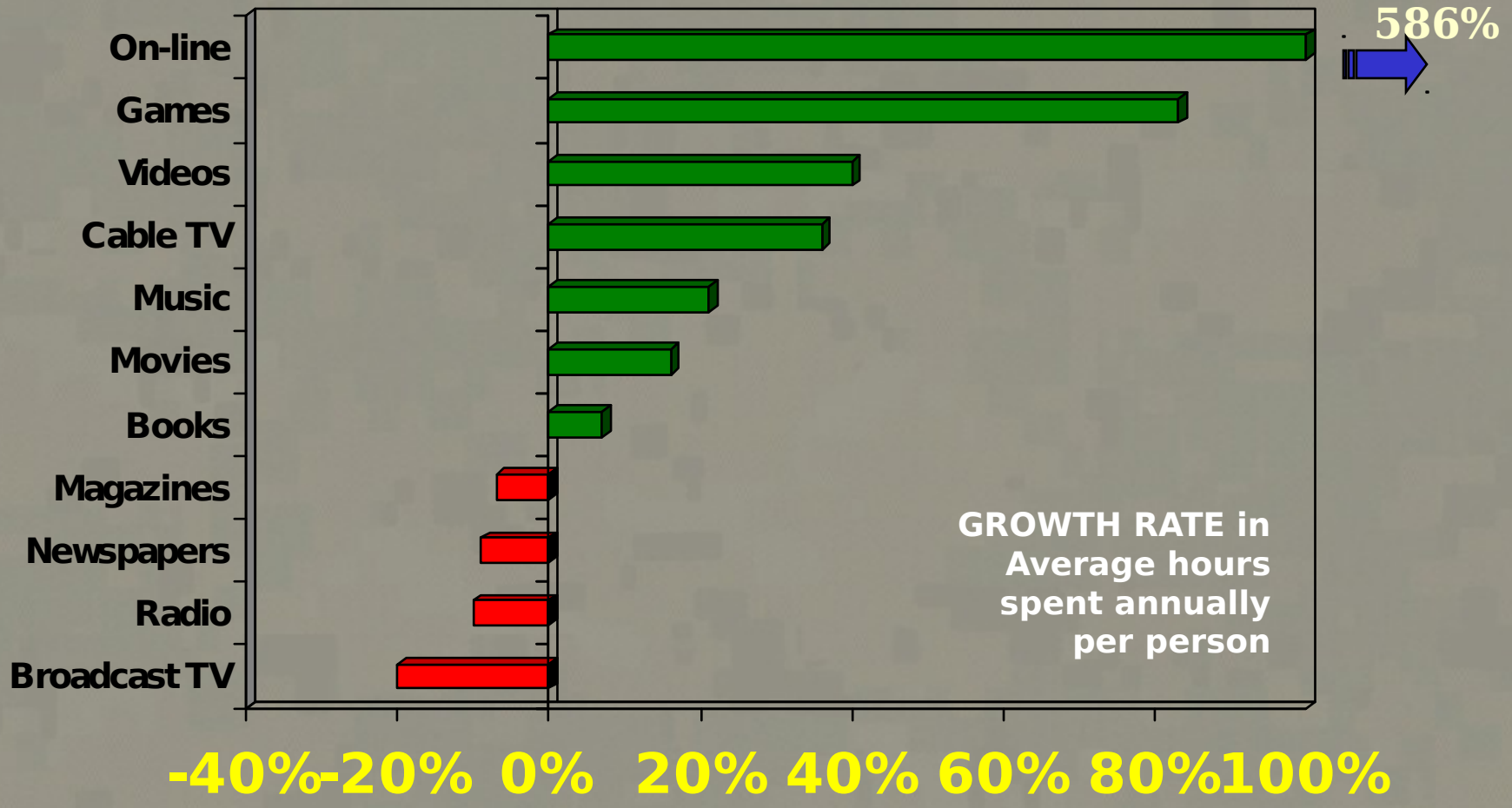
- Base Papers
- Web sites
- Command Cable
- Pentagon Channel



Newspapers from Around the Corps

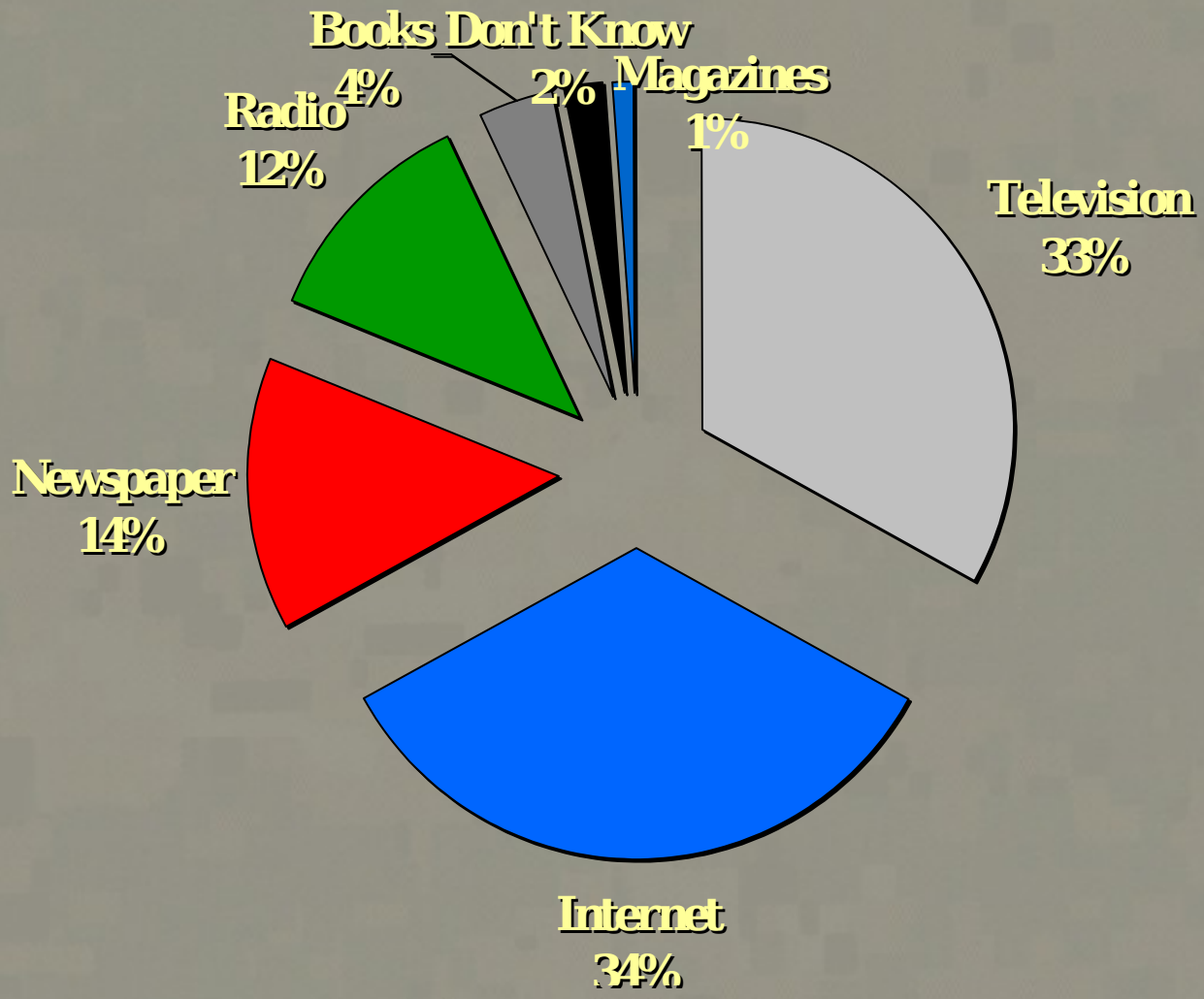
KPEN - Channel 17/30

US Media Use: 1997-2003



Source: Veronis, Suhler & Associates, Wired,

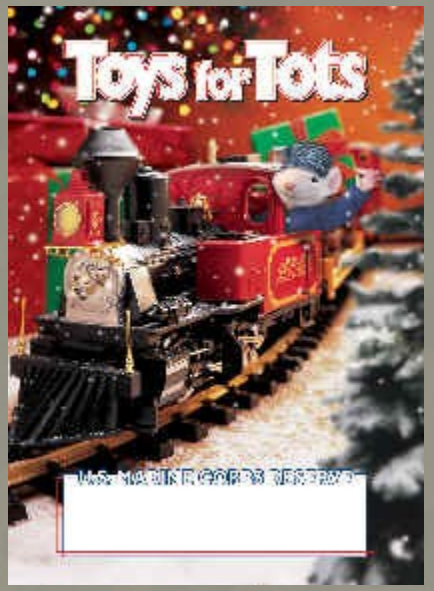
Busy Day? Which Media Win?



Source: Content Intelligence

Community **Relations**

- **Regional Bands**
- **Air Shows**
- **Toys for Tots**
- **General Officer**



External Information

- **Media queries**
- **Press Conferences**
- **Editorial Boards**
- **Round Tables**

Crisis Communications

1995 – Rape on Okinawa

1997 – Blood Winging

1998 - Aviano

2000 – 2001 – OSPREY!!!!

2003-2004 Detention Opera

PA and Legal

- **PAO and SJA should be joined at the hip**
- **Legal considerations play a vital role in a response during a crisis; however, they should not be the determining factor**
- **Acceptance of responsibility without acceptance of liability is possible**
  - **Need not admit liability when publicly pronouncing you are sorry**

Role of the PAO (interviews)

- **Advise** if the proposed interview is authorized, appropriate and, on balance, a good idea
- **Research** potential interview issues, including questions likely to be asked
- **Assist** in helping you prepare for the interview, including review of possible questions and answers and conducting one-on-one rehearsals

Role of the PAO (interviews)

- **Make all arrangements for the interview, including ground rules, time and location**

- **Monitor the interview, if necessary, to provide an in-house record of the interview, as well as follow-up on items to be provided later**

Role of the PAO (interviews)

- **Act as a liaison with the news organization and provide follow-up video copies, news clippings, etc., of the resulting story**

- **Provide after-action review and feedback: did we get our message out and if so, how effectively**

Significant Incidents

- Serious/significant incident command notifications
  - Commanders should generally not first hear of these from the PAO
  - Some commanders assume if the media is, or could become involved, that the notification is a PA responsibility
  - PA responsible for reporting the media interest/ramifications and any media plan, not the incident or the details of what occurred

Common misperceptions or areas of confusion

- Campaign or Strategic PA plans need to be developed for every issue
  - **Useful for big issues that will endure**
  - **Not necessary for every significant, adverse news story**
  - **Should not be confused with PA guidance/response to query (active or passive posture, communication points etc.)**

Common misperceptions or areas of confusion

- Letters to the editor
  - **Should be done to correct an egregious error-in-fact in an article or column**
  - **Media interest pursuant to the initial article is a good barometer in decision-making**
  - **Must decide who the most appropriate author is**
  - **Response is most effective if timely**
  - **No matter how well-written, letters to the editor are a bit like tackling someone in the end-zone**

Keys to Success

- **<u>Proactive means</u> …**

  – Preparing to respond to negative or controversial news and inquiries

  – Encouraging the media to report on positive topics and facilitating access and interviews

  –Initiating and maintaining a good relationship with local officials, key publics and the community at large

Keys to success

- **Include public affairs during the planning process – not at the last minute.**
  - **Include PA in all key staff meetings**
  - **Keep your PAO fully informed all significant or controversial issues**

Keys to success

- Clearly establish who the PAO reports to
  - **Commander**
  - **Chief of Staff/Deputy**

Keys to success

- Establish a defined, streamlined, staffing process for PA products and decisions

  - **News releases etc. are most often time-sensitive**

  - **Subject matter experts should provide facts and not be the editors**

Keys to Success

- *inform your PAO if you have knowledge of a negative incident – the media could become aware at any time, and the PAO must be informed to effectively and expeditiously address the situation*

- *Bad news is not like wine…it does not get better with age!*

Helpful Tips

- Sometimes the best COA is to do nothing
  - **Does not mean you should refuse to answer a legitimate media query**
  - **Could mean you remain in a passive PA posture as opposed to active**
  - **Usually means you don’t respond to adverse reporting, it may only resurrect or heighten interest**

Helpful Tips

- Pick the right spokesperson
  - **PAOs are the right choice for certain situations**
  - **Operators or subject matter experts are often desirable**
  - **Commanders are the most appropriate at times**
    - To express condolences after tragedy or death
    - To address command-level issues
    - Media and the public expects the Commander for interviews periodically

Helpful Tips

- **Say "yes" to Community Relations, but …**
  - **Follow applicable orders**
    - **Marines should not be used as a labor pool for civilian- sponsored events**
    - **Emphasize community involvement in training and installation events that are already planned**
    - **Be cognizant of political overtones**
    - **Exercise caution with events like "Hangar Parties"**
    - **Seek your SJA's advice as appropriate**

Public Affairs Summary

- **Fulfill obligations of informing your internal and external audiences**
- **Include your PAO; allow them to advise you on PA matters in a way the SJA provides legal counsel**
- **Work with the operational commands and share PA assets**
- **Engage the media – provide access to all meaningful installation events**
- **Maintain a robust community relations program within the parameters of established policy and directives**
- **Be open to common-sense changes in garrison PA operations**